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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SANAA 000545

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV PHUM PREL YM DOMESTIC POLITICS](#)

SUBJECT: ISLAH: IN FOR A PEACEFUL STRUGGLE

REF: SANAA 426

Classified By: DCM Nabeel Khoury for Reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Summary: In a February 28 meeting with Islah (Reform) party senior officials, Ambassador and DCM discussed economic reform, corruption, and the need for dialogue with the West. Islah General Secretary Mohammed Abdullah al-Yadoumi, Deputy General Secretary Abdul Wahab al-Anisi, Head of the Political Bureau Mohammed Qahtan and other Islah party leaders uniformly expressed discontent with the proposed 10 percent quota in parliament for women and called for comprehensive economic reform and anti-corruption efforts. Qahtan demurred on the question of an Islahi presidential candidate for 2006, the subject of rampant rumors recently in Sanaa. End Summary.

Women's Quota "Undemocratic"

2. (C) Characterizing the GPC endorsed women's quota for Parliament as "undemocratic," Islah leaders were outspoken in their opposition to the proposal. Political spokesman and moderate, Qahtan said that a woman's role in government must be a "natural progression" announcing that the quota is not on Islah's agenda. "But," he pointed out, "if the GPC majority in Parliament passes it, we will follow." Yadoumi underscored Islah's already strong women's representation, noting that over 300 women were already active in Islah's party structure.

Reform: All or Nothing

3. (C) Turning to economic reform, ostensibly the reason behind the current spat between Saleh and al-Ahmar (reftel), Islah leaders called for a "comprehensive" economic reform program. Anisi suggested that current plans neglect the middle class. In response to Ambassador's inquiry on whether they thought ROYG steps towards reform demonstrated a willingness to change, Yadoumi, with everyone agreeing, responded that the ROYG has done nothing to "really" fight corruption. "They (the GPC) will not even acknowledge that there is a problem, when it is a disaster," Yadoumi commented.

4. (C) Anisi proposed that diesel subsidy reductions could only work if it were part of a complete reform package. He added that there was no place in Yemen for piecemeal reform, and stated Yemen's need to "break the rock" in order to fix the economic situation. Anisi complained that the ruling GPC is not transparent about its discussions with World Bank and IMF officials in order to suppress the bad news often delivered by their interlocutors.

Support our "Peaceful Struggle" for Democracy

5. (C) Expressing disappointment that despite Yemen's wars and revolutions, Qahtan reflected, "the outcome does not reflect the struggle." He explained that Yemen still did not possess the "basis for a state." Urging the Ambassador to "stop encouraging" the ROYG in its current ways, Yadoumi added "the effort is ours but you must support our peaceful struggle for rule of law and democracy." "Instead," he continued, "you talk about Yemen's democracy ... what democracy is that?" Concluding, he said he wished to see Yemen respect "equal application of the law." (Note: From the context of the speech, it was obvious that Yadoumi was referring to corruption. End Note).

6. (C) DCM asked if Islah would run a candidate for the 2006 Presidential Election. Qahtan said, "the issue is still under discussion." (Note: The Sanaa rumor mill is predicting that an Islahi candidate would challenge Saleh in 2006 for the upcoming presidential election. End Note).

Time for Dialogue?

7. (C) At the conclusion of the meeting, Yadoumi asked that the USG help Islah promote an equal dialogue to help build bridges between the West and East in compliance with Islah's

final communiqu issued at the end of its party conference.
Anisi agreed that there needed to be a comprehensive dialogue
between the West and Islamic States and offered to help with
that endeavor.

Comment

18. (C) Comment: The Ambassador's meeting took place as a
public war of words continued between al-Ahmar and Saleh.
Islah was clearly appealing to the Ambassador to treat it as
a viable opposition party and continually criticized GPC
positions. Islah leaders ended every subject by
distinguishing themselves from the GPC. Islah, still more of
a coalition than a party, is nevertheless becoming a strong
political force. Regardless of whether or not they contest
the presidential election, it will be interesting to see how
they do with local council elections, slated to occur
concurrently with the 2006 presidential election. End Comment.
Krajeski